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Bereavement Care

for all who help the bereaved

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Schools are turning to cruse as their interest grows in loss

TEACHERS AND PUPILS IN MANY SCHOOLS throughout the country are showing an increasing awareness of dying and bereavement. Cruse House now handles an average of two requests a week from individuals and groups in schools who want to know more about the subject.

In Newcastle-upon-Tyne talks are taking place between Cruse workers and the City's Education Authority with a view to offering bereavement courses to school counsellors and teachers. These would include sessions to look at the impact of a child's death on his classmates and teacher - an event which, if not handled well, can undermine all classroom activities.

Cruse worker Bell Wilson, a social worker and project leader with Dr. Barnardo's North East Divisional office in Newcastle says: "I used to teach and I realise now that I could have responded so much better to bereaved children if I had had the knowledge I gained later."

At Cruse House requests for infor-mation come occasionally from teachers but more often in a child-ish hand, seeking information for a project on one-parent families. Cruse is now on the syllabus for certain examinations, including the A Level Home Economics course.

Occasionally the writer mentions that Dad has died or that he/she chose the project because Mum is a widow. To such letters, Barbara Pentreath, Cruse House Information Officer, responds with a special reply, directly to the child.

TALK AND LEAFLETS

She says: "We send statistics and other details which are useful for a project, too, of course, but we also add literature for the child's mother to look at and the Cruse leaflet, "My Father Died" which has been prepared for older children and teenagers. In all our packs we give a clear description of ways Cruse helps and counsels.

Further signs of heightened inter-est among educationalists in the effects of bereavement is the grow-ing rate at which Cruse Director Derek Nuttall and branch workers are being asked to talk to groups in schools.

In some special schools where the death of a chronically ill child is a bereavement that classmates, staff and parents face more often than at other schools, research into children's attitudes to dying and how these may differ from adult attitudes is taking place.

Mr. Peter Jeffrey, headmaster of a London school for the physically handicapped and Richard Lansdown, MA.,DIPsych., Principal Psycholo-gist at the Hospital for Sick Children, Gt. Ormond St., London, are to publish a paper on their research into the way such deaths are handled in schools.

Together with Dr. Dora Black,MB., FRCPsych., DPM., consultant child psychiatrist and chairman of the Cruse training committee, they have held seminars recently for the British Psychological Society in London and Exeter for educational-ists and others working with dying children.

Dr. Black says:"Teachers, like all of us, have to come to terms with the prospect of their own mortality and that of their loved ones before they can help their pupils to cope with death and dying."

Director assesses viability of Northern Ireland branches

A Working Group to study development of Cruse in Northern Ireland is being set up and will meet this Autumn following a visit to the Province in June by Derek Nuttall, Cruse Director. Talks are contin-uing with Northern Ireland and Belfast Councils of Social Service, the Marriage Guidance Council, Samaritans, the committee planning a hospice, voluntary groups set up to help those bereaved by the troubles and psychiatrists, psychologists and social workers.

Ideas please!

Cruse celebrates its Silver Jubilee in 1984. If you have ideas for marking the occasion nationally, please write and let us know.

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